PEACE/WILLISTON
FISH & WILDLIFE
COMPENSATION
PROGRAM

BC hydro

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Chase Mountain/Butler Range Caribou Inventory, March 1993

F. B. Corbould
April 1993

PWFWCP Report No. 26

The Peace/Williston Fish & Wildlife Compensation Program is a cooperative venture of BC Hydro and the provincial fish and wildlife management agencies, supported by funding from BC Hydro. The Program was established to enhance and protect fish and wildlife resources affected by the construction of the W.A.C. Bennett and Peace Canyon dams on the Peace River, and the subsequent creation of the Williston and Dinosaur Reservoirs.

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Website: *www.bchydro.bc.ca/environment/initiatives/pwcp/*

This report has been approved by the Peace/Williston Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program Fish Technical Committee.

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CHASE MOUNTAIN/BUTLER RANGE INVENTORY

MARCH 17, 1993

INTRODUCTION:

A total count inventory of caribou on the Chase Mountain/Butler Range area was conducted on March 17, 1993 to identify caribou use and radio-collared caribou sightability. The inventory area was surveyed using a Bell 206 helicopter chartered by Northern Mountain Helicopters from Mackenzie, with pilot Richard Goddard.

SURVEY PERIOD AND CONDITIONS:

The first portion of the survey commenced on the alpine ridge north of Blackpine Lake at 10:10 am and ended at 2:00 pm north of Factor Ross Creek. The second stage began at 4:30 pm near Mica Peak and finished at 4:55 pm at the south end of the Butler Range. Weather conditions were ideal; clear, sunny skies and a temperature of -16°C. Winds were light (5-10 mph). Snow coverage was 100%, with depths ranging from 0 to 50 cm. Roughly three days had past since the last snowfall (skiff).

METHODS:

Surveying involved contour-flying of alpine slopes within the study area using a helicopter and three-person **crew.** One or two passes/contours were generally required. The front seat was occupied by Doug Heard (Regional Wildlife Biologist, B.C. Environment) while the two rear seats were occupied by Fraser Corbould (Wildlife Biologist, Williston Program) and Dana Becker (Forest Ecologist Specialist, B.C. Environment). All observers searched for, counted, and classified animals, however, Heard performed the majority of the classification. Corbould also navigated and recorded the locations of animals seen on a 1:250,000 topographic map. Animals were classified as male or female in each of the three age classes: adults, yearlings and calves.

RESULTS:

A total of 397 caribou and 1 unclassified goat were observed in the study **area.** An additional 19 caribou were sighted on the Wolverine Range on the return flight to Mackenzie. Group size and age/sex classifications are recorded in Table 1, and locations are presented in the Appendices. Caribou were generally found on gentle (5-40%), south-facing alpine slopes between 5500 ft and 7300 ft elevation. Some tracks were noted in subalpine forest areas, especially in the **Mt.** Ferguson area. Two of the three radio-collared caribou within the inventory area were observed on the first pass. The third collared caribou, although counted on the first pass, was not detected as having a collar until telemetry equipment was **utilized.**

Group No.	Total	Adult		Yearling		Calf		U/C
		B	C	M	F	M	F	
1	7	2	4		1			
2	18	12	3		1	1	1	
4	18	4	7		2	2	3	
5	7	1	2	1	1		2	
6	89	24	46		6	4	9	
7	41	10	19		2	4	6	
8	9		9					
9	20	2	11		2	1	4	
Chase Mtn.	209	55	101	1	15	12	25	
10	54	6	39	3	1	4	1	
11	37	9	21			3	4	
12	10	8	1		1			
13	11	9	2					
14	31	5	14		3	2	7	
15	4	1	2				1	
Tomias-west	147	38	79	3	5	9	13	
16	7	1	4	1	1			
17	5		3		1		1	
18	3	3						
19	8	1	3		1	3		
20	4	1	2				1	
Mt. Ferguson	27	6	12	1	3	3	2	
21	13	2	6	1	1	1	2	
22	1							1*
Butler Range	14	2	6	1	1	1	2	1
23	2							2
24	12	3	7	1	1			
25	5		3		2			
Wolverine	19	3	10	1	3			2
TOTAL	416	104	208	7	27	25	42	3

Legend Symbols: B - bull; C - cow; M - male; F - female;
U/C - unclassified.

* mortality

Note:

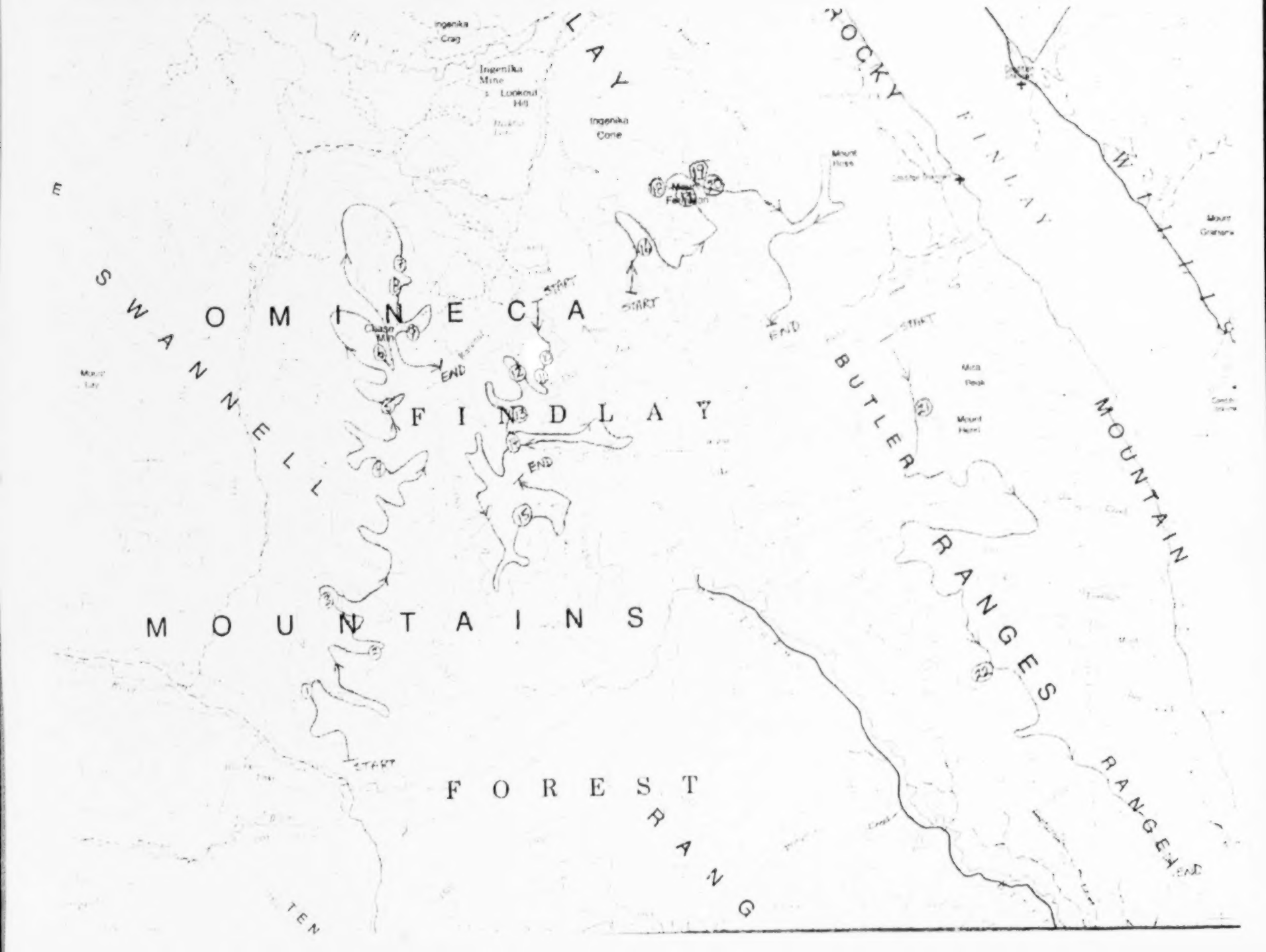
Group 6: Two radio-collared caribou: 150.484 (cow) and 150.534 (bull).

Group 12: One radio-collared caribou: 150.402 (cow).

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Winter surveys of the Chase Mtn/Butler Range area should continue in order to identify wintering areas and numbers, and the overall importance of the two ranges for caribou in the area. Further, surveys should be conducted under different snow conditions (eg. deep snowpack) to determine the influence of snow on area selection.

2. Monitoring of radio-collared caribou by fixed wing should continued on a bimonthly basis for spring and fall migration periods and monthly during the rest of the year.


Ingenika Crag
Ingenika Mine
Lookout Hill
Ingenika Cone
Mount Hose
Mount Graham
Mount Ley
Mica Peak
Mount Henri
START
END
SWANNELL MOUNTAINS
FINDLAY
OMINECA
BUTLER RANGES
ROCKY MOUNTAIN
FOREST
RANGE